

CITY GETS

\$39,000,000 POWDER

PLANT

MUNITIONS FACTORY TO BE CONSTRUCTED NEAR CHATTANOOGA

WILL MANUFACTURE TNT

Site to Be South of River Between Ooltewah and East Chattanooga

TO USE OVER 2,000 MEN

Sources Here Say Building Will Take Eight Months With 8,000 Employed

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Map is printed on Page 13.

The war department's selection of Chattanooga as the site for a \$39,000,000 explosives plant was announced from Washington yesterday by the Associated Press. Local sources supplied the information that the factory will be built on a 7,200-acre tract of land "on the south side of the river between East Chattanooga and Ooltewah" (presumably in the Jersey-Tyner section), that it will take 6,000 to 8,000 men eight months to build the plant and 2,000 to 3,000 men to operate it.

The plant will manufacture trinitrotoluene (TNT), which is described as "the most widely used explosive in modern warfare" by the June, 1941, issue of the Chemtator, chemical metallurgical engineering publication.

Full details of the plant have not yet been made public. It is to consist of several buildings, so constructed that an explosion in one will not set off combustibles in others, and extending, according to one estimate,

for "two to three miles." S. R. Finley, general superintendent of the Electric Power Board, of Chattanooga, in an official statement, said only that the plant would be "on the south side of the river between Chattanooga and Ooltewah." Other sources placed the site variously in "the Silverdale area," in Jersey, and between Jersey and Tyner.

Plant Builder Not Known

It is not yet known definitely who will build the plant, or who will operate it when it is built. Government policy in this respect has been to entrust the operation of major munitions plants to large private companies, and it was reported that the Hercules Powder company would build the local factory, but precise details as to its operation are not yet available.

Representatives of the army ordnance department, it was said, are already in this area, examining titles to the land chosen for the site, and appraising the property. The actual acquisition of the land is to go forward in a few days, it was said. The land, it is estimated, will cost \$540,000.

Building of the plant will include the laying of a considerable amount of railroad track, as a spur of the Southern Railway to expedite deliveries and shipments. The Tennessee Employment service has ascertained that enough brick-layers, carpenters, concrete workers, electricians, pipe fitters, sheet metal workers, steel workers and laborers for the job are available within a twenty-five mile radius of the city.

TNT, the Chemtator article explains, "explodes like dynamite with an enormous disruptive force and, unlike smokeless powder, it is not slow-burning. It is ideal for military use

because it can be heated, dropped, and even burned without exploding.

"TNT is melted to the consistency of molasses before being poured into projectiles. . . . A projectile can be shipped, loaded into a big gun and fired with a tremendous charge of smokeless powder—and still the TNT will not go off. A (TNT-loaded) projectile explodes only when a special detonator in the tip of its nose sets off the charge, and it will not explode sooner even though the projectile suffers the impact of piercing a piece of armor plate."

The selection of Chattanooga as a site for the factory represents the culmination of negotiations which have been in progress for almost a year between Chattanoogaans, notably John Chrosniak, employe of the Electric Power Board of Chattanooga, and Representative Estes Kefauver and war department representatives.

Factors in City's Favor

A factor which weighed in the city's favor was the ready availability of the necessary natural resources—fresh water, of which the plant will consume some 75,000,000 gallons a day, acids and raw materials produced at Copperhill and in the Chattanooga area, abundant labor, open land not too remote from a large center of population, rail and water transportation, and low-cost electricity approximating 10,000 kilowatts.

In addition to supplying all those requirements, Chattanooga has the geographical advantage of being an inland city, remote both from the seacoast and the heavy manufacturing areas around the Great Lakes.

Mr. Chrosniak, selected for the task because of wide army experience, began visiting army contract offices in Atlanta, Washington, Wilmington, Cincinnati, Chicago and Cleveland O. in early June, 1940.

His work of laying Chattanooga's qualifications before army officials became a full-time job when the Chattanooga National Defense com-

mittee was formed, with I. B. Merriam as its head. As liaison agent for the committee, Mr. Chrosniak, still on full salary from the power board, was sent to Washington to promote defense contracts for Chattanooga.

(Other members of the defense committee are W. E. Brock, T. R. Preston, J. Courtenay, Twinam, Mercer Reynolds and S. R. Finley. Others whose efforts contributed to Chattanooga's selection as a site for the explosives plant were Mayor E. D. Bass, Wiley O. Couch, County Judge Will Cummings, and Tennessee's United States Senators McKellar and Stewart.)

During the past year Chattanooga has been visited by various army officers, and comprehensive and complete data, outlining all facts, were filed with them. About two months ago, army officers were conducted on a tour of suggested sites for the plant by I. J. Wilhoite, chairman of the E. P. B. C., Mr. Twinam, E. P. B. C. vice-chairman, George Parker, chief engineer of the distributing agency, Ken Whitaker, administrative assistant, and operating officials of the board.

Engineers Studied Site

Six weeks ago, consulting engineers made an exhaustive study of the site, including in their survey the terrain, geological features, water supply and other factors. Their report was approved by the various army departments involved, and by the site committee of the office of production management.

Mr. Finley stated that the title "Volunteer Ordnance works" had been selected tentatively for the new munitions factory.

Local sources were unanimous in praising Mr. Chrosniak and Representative Kefauver for their efforts, and many others were lauded as well.

Harry C. Carbaugh, president of the Chamber of Commerce, said: "The location of a powder plant at Chattanooga is the culmination of many weeks of work on the part of a number of people in our good city. This plant will mean more business for Chattanooga, more employment, and most important of all, it will mean a chance for Chattanooga to contribute its share in helping to make a success of the great defense program which is now becoming a reality in this country."

"Credit for this effort goes jointly to all those concerned with it. I would, however, like for the public to know just who deserves the gratitude of our citizens. First, I would name T. R. Preston, whose power and influence in Washington are great; next, the power board, which, through its industrial department, led by John Chrosniak, maintained constant contact with the authorities in Washington. Congressman Kefauver was on the job nearly every day in the week in behalf of this project."